

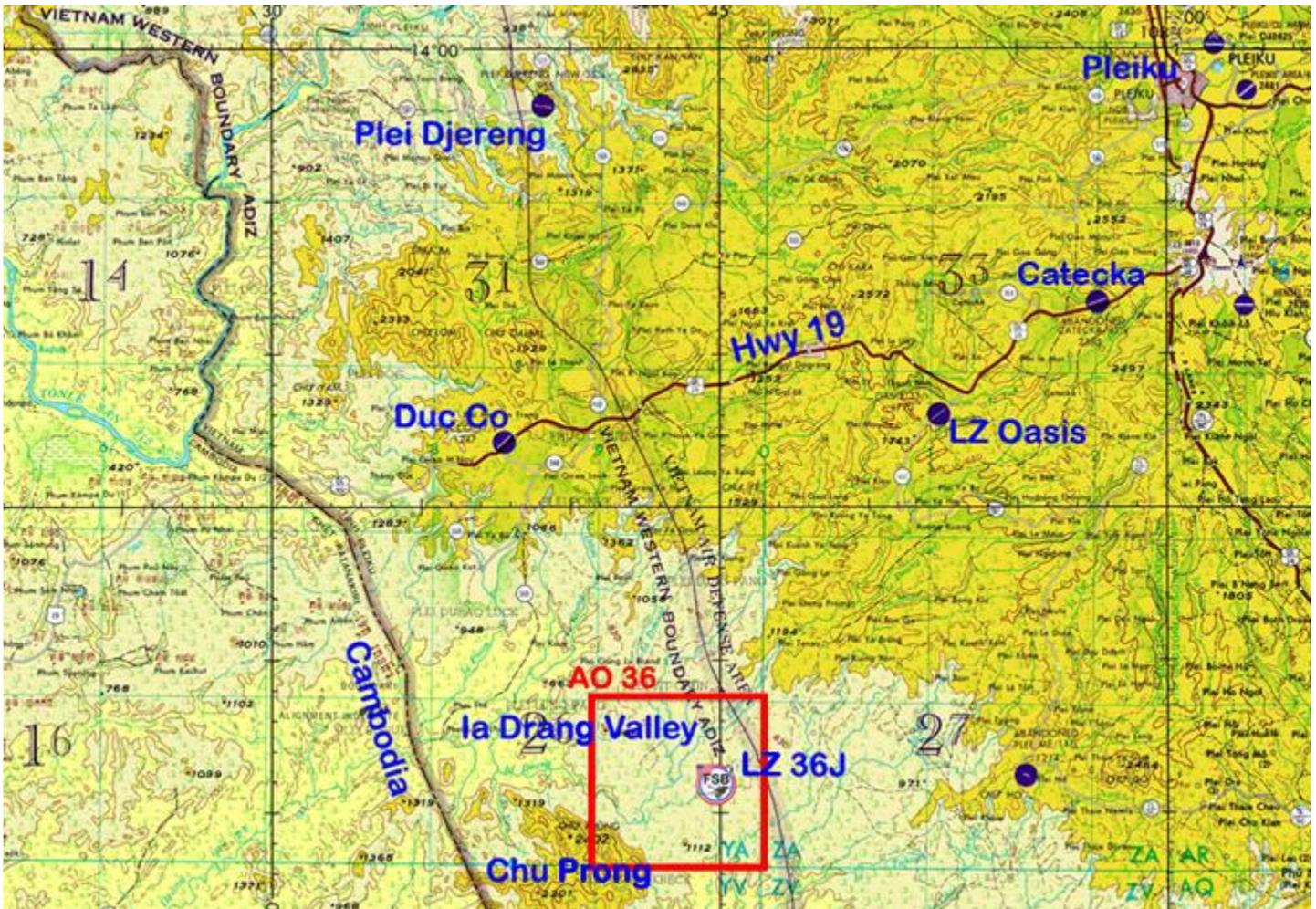


WELCOME TO "A WALK WITH THE 35TH"



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2d Bn 35th Inf moves into AO 36



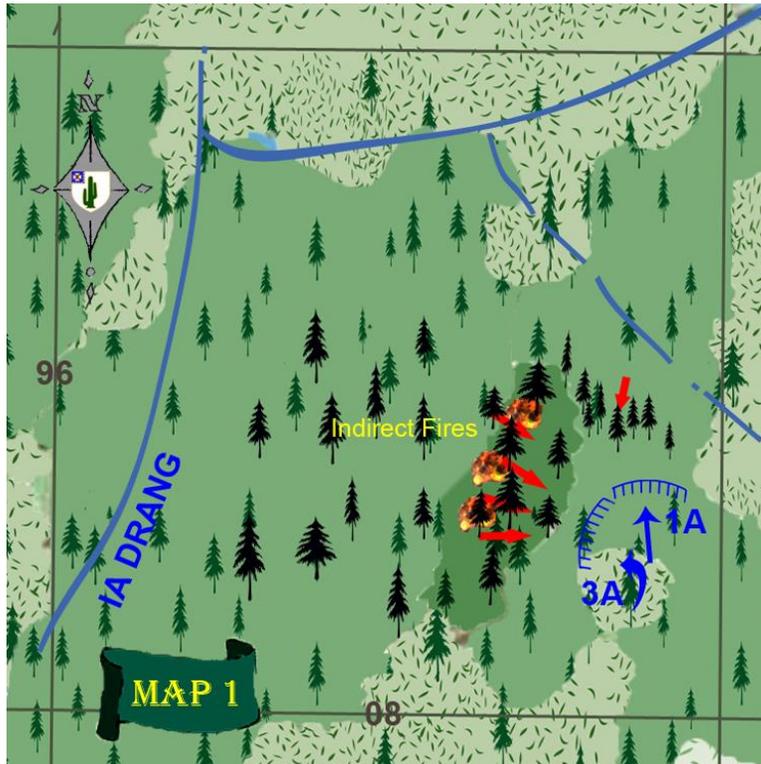
The 2d battalion, 35th Infantry had conducted search and destroy operations in AO 61 until the 28th of July when they moved into AO 36 and AO 37. The battalion CP was located at LZ 36J (YA973053). As the reporting period for the 3d Bde Task Force was coming to an end, it became evident that the NVA were taking advantage of the monsoon season to penetrate further east into Vietnam. On the 29th, ten NVA were engaged: one was killed and two were captured. One of the captured enemy reported that his own unit, the 66th NVA Regiment was located about four kilometers from the border on the northern slopes of the Chu Pong Massif. And, that the 32d Regiment was inside Vietnam about ten kilometers southwest of Oasis.

On 30 July 1966, Companies B and C executed a heliborne assault, Company C into LZ 28A and Company B into ZA 046125. The battalion 107mm cannon platoon was moved from LZ 36I to the battalion CP at LZ 36J. Elements of the battalion reconnaissance platoon and Company A made contact with small NVA elements at YA 969056 and YA 959068. Two NVA were killed and an estimated three NVA wounded. There were no friendly casualties.

LZ 36J - 31 July

On 31 July 1966 Companies A and C continued to search for trails in zone and establish ambushes thereon. Company A (-) returned to the area of the 29-30 Jul 66 contact, arriving at YA 968074 at approximately 1100.

Noting a suspicious thicket ahead, Capt. McDonough halted his force (consisting of the 1st and 3d platoons) and directed Lt. Steltman, platoon leader of the lead (1st) platoon either to adjust indirect fire on the thicket or to dispatch a small reconnaissance party. Lt. Steltman chose the latter.



A reinforced squad was sent out. The squad in turn put out a point man. In perhaps ten minutes, the point man detected three NVA and took them under fire. One M-79 round was fired. Following the M-79 round, an NVA MG began firing. Lt. Steltman began moving the remainder of the 1st platoon forward to assist the squad in contact.

In the meantime, the forward squad detected another five NVA moving SW. A hot fire fight developed. Capt. McDonough moved forward to contact Lt. Steltman and to develop an estimate of the situation.

Since the heaviest fire at this time was coming from the west, Capt. McDonough maneuvered the 3d platoon, commanded by Lt. Tragakis, in that direction. The vegetation

in the area near the trail was relatively open, however, west of the trail the vegetation featured tall bamboo and difficult thicket. This terrain condition prevailed all the way west to the IA DRANG River.

The 3d platoon came under fire in this thicket. An artillery smoke adjustment round landed practically on top of an enemy MG position area. Very quickly, the smoke diffused through the thicket and reduced visibility almost to zero. Under these visibility conditions, the enemy in that area broke contact. In the meantime, Lt. Steltman continued to maneuver to the east of the 3d platoon.

Throughout the actions just described, artillery, 81mm and 4.2" mortar fire were brought into the area in quantity. This indirect fire initially was long to the NNE and thereafter was moved SSW into the scene of action. Zone type fire was employed.

When at length the indirect fire was lifted, Capt. McDonough's force swept and searched the area. One NVA KIA was found, also four extremely heavy blood trails. Enemy holes were found in the banks of the stream. (Bn Commanders comment: Of interest is the fact that Company A was engaged across a frontage of at least 200 meters.) (MAP 1)

Capt. McDonough personally identified the presence of three MG's. The men of the 1st platoon claim to have seen twenty enemy, an unusually high number physically to sight and thus leading one to the conclusion that two or three times that number quite possibly managed to escape detection; plus there remains that portion of the enemy force engaged by the 3d platoon.



LT Tragakis photo by George Jacunski

Following the search, the 3d platoon was ordered to conduct a counterclockwise sweep of the scene of action.

Meanwhile, the 1st platoon collected the friendly casualties (1 KIA, 6 WIA) and dispatched an element to reconnoiter for a medevac LZ. By the time the 3d platoon had completed its sweep, the 1st platoon LZ reconnaissance group also had returned. The 1st platoon then secured the area while the 3d platoon (-) repaired to the LZ and improved it as necessary. The 1st squad, 3d platoon, meanwhile was sent a short distance north along the trail as an additional security measure....time: 1240.

1400h: Personnel of the 1st platoon and several members of the company command group carried the casualties to the LZ. DUSTOFF aircraft negotiated the improved LZ and completed the medevac.

The 3d platoon moved out to the NNE prior to the completion of the medevac. By 1430, the 1st platoon had caught up to the 3d platoon and Captain McDonough consolidated his forces at YA 972077.

Enemy sniper fire began. The 3d platoon replied with MGs and M-79s. Lt. Knutson, the artillery FO, called in artillery and 4.2" mortar fire. The adjustment and FFE consumed twenty to 25 minutes. Meanwhile, to the east at YA 977078, a FAC had spotted two hooches apparently made of cut lumber. Later he assisted in the adjustment of artillery fire on these hooches.

Indirect fire was placed into a thicket north of YA 972077 and associated with the intermittent stream there.

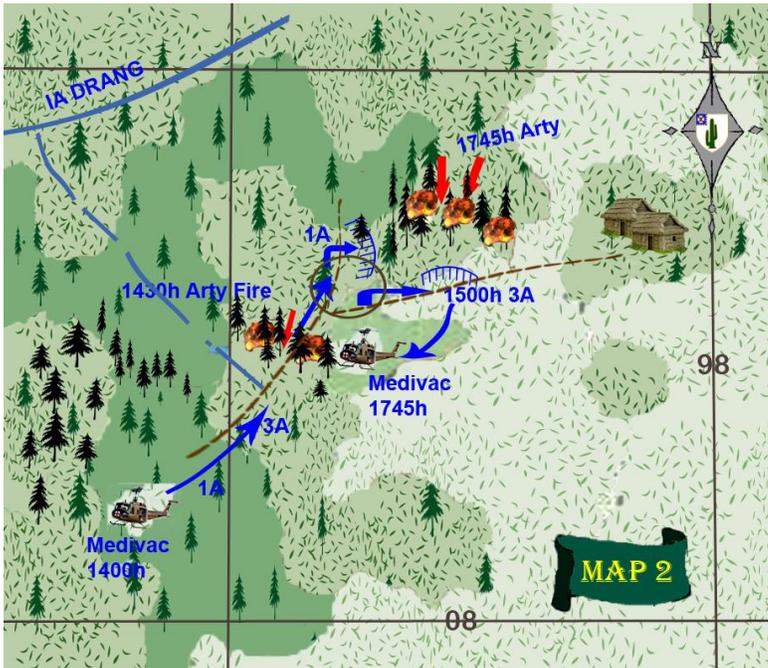
As the artillery and 4.2" mortar fire was lifted from this thicket and shifted to the N and E, Capt. McDonough moved with the 3d platoon across the stream and thicket. The platoon emerged from the thicket into an open area north of the stream. A trail junction was noted in the open area. The 3d platoon was sent down the trail heading east toward the hooches. Lt. Steltman brought forward his 1st platoon. He was instructed to investigate the trail to the north.

Just as Lt. Steltman was about to put his platoon in motion, the 3d platoon began receiving AW (2) and sniper fire from the north. For a moment, the 3d platoon and the company command group were pinned down. The snipers seemed to be in trees; however, none could be detected. The 3d platoon quickly generated a base of fire and began maneuvering in the face of accurate enemy sniper fire. This phase lasted perhaps fifteen minutes. Numerous shell holes provided convenient cover.

An enemy strong point appeared to be associated with a large rock outcropping NE of the trail junction. Capt. McDonough quickly began maneuvering the 1st platoon around to the east of the 3d platoon and into a thicket. The 1st platoon moved slowly and with caution. Gradually sniper fire from the NE diminished.

Meanwhile, the artillery, which previously had been shifted to the N and E, was quickly brought back to the SW. Artillery fragments tore at the treetops over Captain McDonough's position thirty meters in rear of the forward elements.

Under cover of the artillery fire, the wounded were withdrawn. Although the sniper fire diminished in the face of friendly artillery fire, it did not completely cease. Two additional men were wounded in the process of extracting friendly casualties. First Sergeant Perez took charge of the wounded. Captain McDonough dispatched a reconnaissance party to search for a medevac LZ. The wounded were moved to a safe area and the 1st and 3d platoons followed to make room for an air strike on station.



Capt. McDonough, Lt Knutson, and a MG team from the 1st platoon remained at the scene of action to assist in the conduct of the air strike. Much ordnance was dropped; however, aircraft fuel level became critical before the 500 pounders could be released.

Meanwhile, the wounded were moved to a LZ several hundred meters to the west. The LZ required improvement. A power saw was lowered in. The LZ quickly was made acceptable and friendly casualties (2 KIA and 9 WIA) were evacuated by helicopter around 1745h. **(MAP 2)**

Once the air strike was completed, Capt. McDonough started action to get artillery fire

back into the area; however, a psywar ship appeared over the scene of action and requested permission to get into the act. Permission was granted. Company A set out to return to its base at LZ 36J.

Following the psywar spiel, another airstrike was brought into the area. This final air effort, which started at approximately 1815, completed the action. H&I fires were programmed into the scene of action in order to deny the enemy an easy battlefield police situation. (Bn Commanders comment: This second contact demonstrates again the deadly effectiveness of snipers. Captain McDonough performed precisely as instructed, i.e., used available support weaponry and maneuvered slowly and with great care. The late hour prevented a search of the scene of action to evaluate the effectiveness of the air and artillery efforts).

As July ended, intelligence reports indicated that the North Vietnamese were using the monsoon season's cloud cover and rains to shuffle old units and infiltrate new ones into South Vietnam. A North Vietnamese soldier, captured on the twenty-ninth, reported that his own regiment, the *66th*, was ensconced about four kilometers east of the border on the northern slopes of the Chu Pong Massif and that a sister regiment, the *32d*, was about ten kilometers southwest of OASIS. General Larsen wasted no time. Concentrating infantry, armor, and the Koreans north and northeast of the mass if, he enlarged General Walker's task force to six battalions by giving him control over the I Field Force reserve-Lt. Col. William M. Vaughn's 2d Battalion, 7th Cavalry-on the thirtieth.

It now appeared that the enemy had begun a major offensive west of Pleiku City. The 1st Battalion, 69th Armor, under the command of Lt. Col. Ronald J. Fairfield, reported unusually heavy civilian traffic crossing Highway 19 from south to north, a good indicator of hostile activity. The Special Forces camp at Duc Co also reported a number of sightings of and encounters with enemy units.